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November 16, 2015

To: Instructional Quality Commission
c/o Thomas Adams, Executive Director
1430 N Street, Suite 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Expert Input from Dr. B.B. Lal

Enclosed is a letter from Dr. B.B. Lal, former director of the Archeological Survey of India, Later he served as Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. He has published over 150 papers and several books, and is most noted for his work on the Harappan site of Kalibangan, Indus-Saraswati civilization.

We have attached the letter, which has been sent directly to the IQC, as well as the pages of his recent book, *The Rigvedic People*, which he cites in his letter. This is for your convenience.

At our request, he has addressed several key historical points which relate to Uberoi edits one to four: 1) plausibility of Aryan Migration theory; 2) date of the Vedic literature; 3) Indo-European speakers passing through Iran to India; 4) plausibility of Dravidian language in the Indus region; and 5) plausibility of Indo-European languages being indigenous to India.

With kind regards,

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November 13, 2015

Subject: California Framework for History-Social Studies

Dear Dr. Adams,

Kindly refer to p.211 of the draft under consideration, which reads as follows:

“Indian history then entered the Vedic period (ca.1500-500 BCE), an era named for the Vedas There is another point of view that suggests that the language was indigenous and spread northward, but it is a minority position.”

Dr. Adams, you are yourself a learned scholar and know full well that **truth can be only one**. It cannot be dependent on majority and minority voting.

May I humbly draw your kind attention to my latest book on the subject under consideration. It is titled *The Rigvedic People: ‘Invaders’? / ‘Immigrants’? / or ‘Indigenous’? Evidence of Archaeology and Literature*. It has been published this year by Aryan Books International (New Delhi). I am arranging to send you a copy of it. But that may take some time. Hence may I request you kindly to obtain a copy of it from some bookseller in USA: Amazon.com or South Asia Books, Columbia?

On the various points mentioned in the above-quoted statement, my observations are as follows:

1. The dating of the Vedic period to 1500-500 BCE.

The combined evidence of archaeology, hydrology, C-14 method of dating and literature clearly establishes that the *Rigveda* is as old as the 3rd millennium BCE, if not still earlier.

Further, according to *Rigveda* X.75.5-6, the Rigvedic people occupied the entire area from the upper reaches of the Ganga-Yamuna on the east to the Indus on the west. Archaeologically, this was precisely the area occupied by the Harappan Civilization of the 3rd millennium BCE. Hence, **the *Rigveda* and the Harappan Civilization are but two faces of the same coin.**

Still further, the C-14 dates for Bhirrana, a site showing the formative stage of the Harappan Civilization, go back to the 5th mill.BCE. Thus, it gets established that the Harappans are indigenous. And since The Harappans themselves are the Vedic people, **the Vedic people are indigenous.** (See pp. 118-23 of my book *The Rigvedic People*.)

2. The theory that the Vedic people were invaders from the west is absolutely wrong.

See in this context pp. 10-18 of my book.

3. Likewise, the alternative theory of Aryan Immigration from the Bactria-Margiana region of Central Asia **is equally faulty**. See pp. 19-33 of the book.
4. Finally, the theory that the Harappans were a Dravidian-speaking people is full of many pit-falls and is, therefore, untenable. See pp.11-13 of the book.

I know I am asking you to do a little bit of patient reading. However, since you are a votary of the truth, I am sure you will not resent it.

With regards,

Yours sincerely

B. B. Lal



CHAPTER 2

The 'Aryan Invasion' Theory: An In-depth Analysis

The seeds of the concept that the Aryans were aliens to India had, in a way, been sown as far back as the 19th century when a renowned German scholar, Max Muller, dated the Vedas to circa 1200 BCE. Since he had no concrete evidence to go by, he took recourse to ad-hocism. Accepting that the *Sūtra* literature was datable to circa sixth century BCE, Muller thought that a period of two hundred years would be good enough for each of the preceding textual periods of the Vedic literature, namely those of the *Āraṇyakas*, *Brāhmaṇas* and the Vedas. Thus, $600+200+200+200 = 1,200$ BCE was the magic figure he arrived at. It may have been a fragile ray of light at a time when there was almost complete darkness surrounding the date of the Vedas – the proverbial 'something is better than nothing'. But this ad-



hocism did not go unnoticed. Muller's contemporaries, like Goldstucker, Whitney and Wilson, came down heavily upon him and questioned this kind of methodology. Cornered from all sides, Muller climbed down and wrote in his Preface to the *Rigveda* as follows:

I have repeatedly dwelt on the merely hypothetical character of the dates, which I have ventured to assign to the first periods of Vedic literature. All I have claimed for them is that they are minimum dates, and that the literary productions of each period which either still exist or which formerly existed could hardly be accounted for within shorter limits of time than those suggested.

But this kind of half-hearted apology did not work and Max Muller was obliged to categorically admit (*Physical Religion* 1890, reprint 1979):

If now we ask how we can fix the dates of these periods, it is quite clear that we cannot fix a terminum a qua [sic]. Whether the Vedic hymns were composed [in] 1,000 or 1,500 or 2,000 or 3,000 BC no power on earth will ever determine.

The great pity, however, is that in spite of such a candid confession by Max Muller himself, his Fatwa of 1,200 BCE still holds good with some of his followers, both in India and abroad. A seed once sown keeps on throwing up its shoots, in spite of heavy doses of plant-killers!

Anyway, the eventual effect of Max Muller's dating of the Vedas to 1,200 BCE showed up when in the 1920s the Indus Civilization was discovered on the Indian subcontinent. Since some objects belonging to this civilization had also been found in cultural deposits in Western Asia in a datable context of the 3rd millennium BCE, it was but natural to assign the Indian Civilization as well to that period.

The fall-out of it all was that, since according to the Fatwa of Max Muller the Vedas were only as old as 1,200 BCE, the Indus Civilization was at once declared to be pre-Vedic and non-Vedic. Further, since the only other major ethnic group in India was that of the Dravidian-speaking people, it was a downright conclusion that the authors of the Indus Civilization were none other than the Dravidian speakers. To make this theory more



spicy, it was further added that the Indo-Aryan invaders destroyed the Indus Civilization and its Dravidian-speaking authors were driven away to South India where the Dravidian-speaking people live even today. To make this thesis look more plausible, it was argued that while the bulk of the Indus people migrated all the way to South India a handful of them managed to stay behind; and these survivors are identified with a small group of Brahui-speaking people living in a part of Baluchistan in Pakistan.

This Brahui issue has been examined by many scholars who hold that this language is not a part of the Dravidian group. On the other hand, they think that it is an off-shoot of the eastern Elamite. Some other scholars opine that the Brahui-speakers are not ancient inhabitants of the area but moved thereto during the medieval times. Thus, not much weight can be attached to the Brahui factor in holding that the Brahui-speakers of Baluchistan are remnants of the ancient people who authored the Indus Civilization.

We now turn our attention to the thesis that the Indus people, who supposedly were Dravidian speakers, were driven by the Indo-Aryan invaders to South India. If this thesis has even an iota of truth, we should find the cultural remains of the incoming Indus people in South India. But the fact of the matter is that there is not even a single site associable with the Indus Civilization in the whole of South India – be it Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh or Karnataka or Kerala. On the other hand, what we find is that around that time the just-stated regions of South India were occupied by the Neolithic folks. Are we then supposed to believe that Indus people, on reaching South India, suddenly shed off their advanced culture and took to a Stone Age way of living? All this clearly controverts any immigration of Indus people into South India.

The thesis that the Indus people were Dravidian speakers can be test-checked in another manner. It has been observed all over the world that even when a new set of people come to a country, settle there and set up towns and cities of their own, the settlements of the earlier inhabitants continue to be there with their original names. To cite a well-known example: A few centuries ago there was a mass-scale migration of the Europeans,



including the British, to what is now known as the United States of America. These immigrants forcibly took over lands from the original inhabitants, then called Red Indians (and now American Indians). They were pushed into areas what are euphemistically known as Indian Reserves. Anyway, that is American history. The point that I wish to make here is that even though the newcomers established their own cities like New York, New Jersey and so on and gave names to rivers like the Hudson, the names given by the earlier people could not be obliterated. Examples of the continuity of the older names are: the cities of Chicago and Massachusetts and the rivers known as Missouri and Mississippi.

Nearer home, Delhi is a good example of such continuity. While the incoming British established Lutyens' New Delhi, the Old Delhi, known as Shahjahanabad, is still there. In fact, still earlier settlements like Qila Rai Pithora and even the earliest one known as Indraprastha (bounded by what is called the Purana Qila) continue to bear the same name.

The point that is being made by citing these examples is, to repeat what has already been stated, that older names do not vanish in the air though the new ones come into being on the terra firma. Let us project this analogy back into the Indus times. If the Indus Valley people, who are claimed to have been Dravidian speakers, were driven away by the 'invading Aryans' to South India, there should nevertheless remain some Dravidian-oriented names of cities and rivers in the vast domain of the Indus Valley civilization. But the hard fact is that there is not even a single example to testify to this. Why is this so? The reason is very clear: the Indus Valley people were not Dravidian speakers.

If they were not Dravidian speakers, then who were they? What was their ethnic identity? While we shall answer this question a little later, here we examine in some detail the hollowness of the Aryan invasion theory.

Mortimer Wheeler (later knighted), in the report on his 1946-excavations at Harappa, wrote as follows (Wheeler 1947: 82):

Aryan invasion of the Land of Seven Rivers, the Punjab and its environs, constantly assumes the form of an onslaught upon the walled cities of the aborigines. For these cities the term used in the *Rigveda* is *pur*, meaning a 'rampart', 'fort' or 'stronghold'



..... Indra, the Āryan War-god, is *purandara*, 'fort-destroyer'. He shatters 'ninety forts' for his Āryan protege Divodasa.

Where are – or were – these citadels? It has in the past been supposed that they were mythical, or were 'merely places of refuge against attack, ramparts of hardened earth with palisades and a ditch'. The recent excavation of Harappa may be thought to have changed the picture. Here we have a highly evolved civilization of essentially non-Āryan type, now known to have employed massive fortifications, and known also to have dominated the river-system of north-western India at a time not distant from the likely period of the earlier Āryan invasions of that region. What destroyed this firmly settled civilization? Climatic, economic, political deterioration may have weakened it, but its ultimate extinction is more likely to have been completed by deliberate and large-scale destruction. It may be no mere chance that at a late period of Mohenjo-daro men, women and children appear to have been massacred there. **On circumstantial evidence, Indra stands accused.** (Emphasis added.)

His pronouncement, namely 'On circumstantial evidence, Indra stands accused', may be regarded as the high water mark of the 'Aryan Invasion' theory, which became, as it were, the gospel truth for decades to come until it was demonstrated to be hollow by subsequent writers.

Let us first have a look at the kingpin of Wheeler's thesis, namely the so-called 'massacre' at Mohenjo-daro. Having an overall perimeter of about 4.5 kilometers, the site has two components: a small fortified area on the west, called the 'Citadel', and a much larger area on the east, known as the 'Lower Town'. While the former contained many religious and other important structures and may have been the residential area for the priests and elites, the latter was, as one can see, the habitation area for the common people, such as merchants, agriculturists, craftsmen, etc.

All the skeletons, complete or fragmentary, came from the Lower Town and none from the Citadel. For purposes of supervision of the excavation, the area in the Lower Town was subdivided and allotted to various officers. Thus, we have names such as HR Area (after H.R. Hargreaves), VS Area (after M.S. Vats), and DK Area (after K.N. Dikshit). The skeletal



remains were not found in a single area, but were distributed all over the site. Vertically, the structures encountered at the site were assigned to Early, Intermediate and Late periods. The locations of the skeletons and their stratigraphic horizons, in brief, were as follows:

HR Area, House V, Room 74: 14 skeletons—The excavator held that, since 4 of the skeletons lay above the ruins of a wall of the Late Period, these should be assigned to a time posterior to abandonment of the settlement as a whole.

HR Area, House III: Incomplete remains of 3 skeletons, from Late Period.

HR Area, 'Deadman's Lane', 1 fragmentary skeleton; stratigraphy debated, Intermediate/Late Period.

VS Area, a lane between two houses, 6 skeletons. Stratigraphy debated, Intermediate/Late Period.

DK Area, Block 10A, 9 skeletons, many of them incomplete, fragments of crania and other bones. Probably Late Period.

DK Area, G Section, 'Well Room Tragedy', 2 skeletons, Late Period.

It would be seen from the above that: (i) the skeletons are scattered all over the site; and (ii) they belong to different horizons, namely Intermediate, Late and even posterior to the abandonment of the site.

What does the entire evidence show? If the 'massacre' theory is to hold good, the implication would be that the 'invaders' went from area to area to kill the inhabitants, since the skeletons are widely distributed in space. Well, one would have accepted this explanation, but what does one do with the hard fact that chronologically the skeletons belong to different periods, namely Intermediate, Late and are even posterior to the abandonment of the site. Had the skeletons been related to a massacre, they should have come from one and the same period, which would normally have been the latest, since it has been claimed that after the massacre the inhabitants were forced to leave the site. Very clearly, therefore, the skeletons have nothing to do with any invasion and massacre.

There are other questions which may rightly be asked. The victims of an invasion, at least some of them, should bear marks of injuries inflicted on them, either with javelin or sword or



even arrows, but no such injury marks have been reported by any of the excavators. Nor have any weapons of warfare been reported from any of the sites. It would lead to an assumption that the invaders carried away with them all the weapons and the invaded were in all cases unarmed. This would appear to be a far-fetched assumption.

All said, therefore, there is no case for sustaining the theory of a massacre and George F. Dales (1964) very rightly dubbed it as a 'Mythical Massacre'. Further, if it had really been a case of mass-massacre and extermination of the Harappans by the Aryan invaders, one would expect a few other sites too to have yielded some evidence of that sort. But the hard fact is that, though hundreds of Harappan sites have been excavated by now, none has yielded any evidence even remotely suggestive of such a happening. Nor has any site yielded remains of an intrusive culture, which may be associated with so-called invaders. There is a continuity of occupation, though at some sites signs of deterioration may no doubt be seen. But that is a natural process that took place in long-lived and exhausted material cultures the world over.

Thus, whether Sir Mortimer would have liked it or not, **Indra stands exonerated.**

A close associate of Wheeler, Professor Stuart Piggott, even attempted to draw a pen-picture of the hypothetical Aryan invasion in the following words (1952: 238-39):

In sum, however, the evidence from Baluchistan and from Sind and the Punjab is reasonably consistent in implying that at some period likely to have been before 1500 BC (to use a convenient round figure) the long-established cultural traditions of North-Western India were rudely and ruthlessly interrupted by the arrival of a new people from the west. The burning of Baluchi villages and the equipment of the graves at Sahi Tump suggest that these new arrivals were predominantly conquerors who travelled light, and adopted the pottery of the region in which they established themselves. In Sind, at Chanhudaro, a barbarian settlement appears [evidently the reference is to the Jhukar Culture] in the deserted ruins of the Harappan town, and here some local craftsmen may have remained to work for their alien masters, while the pottery suggests a resurgence of local, non-Harappan elements. At Mohenjo-daro it seems clear



that the civilization that had survived so long was already effete and on the wane when the raiders came, and at Harappa we know from the evidence of the re-building of the Citadel walls that the inhabitants were on the defensive in the last days of the city, though these precautionary measures did not suffice to keep away the intruders, wherever they came from, who afterwards settled on the ruins and buried their dead in Cemetery H for generations.

There is a lot of make-belief in what Piggott has just stated. Thus, for example, no one seriously believes that the occurrence of ash, charcoal and red earth at a few sites in Baluchistan or the graves at Shahi Tump are associable with any 'conquerors'. As to the Jhukar Culture at Chanhudaro, M.R. Mughal's excavations have conclusively proved that this culture was not at all alien but just a transition from the Harappa Culture itself (Mughal 1992). Similar is the case with the Cemetery H Culture at Harappa. Recent excavations by Meadow and Kenoyer have established five periods of occupation at the site, of which Period 4 (counting from the bottom) shows a transition towards the Cemetery H Culture, which is full bloom in Period 5 (Kenoyer 1991: 56).

Period 5 may reflect only a change in the focus of settlement organization from that which was the pattern of the earlier Harappan phase and not cultural discontinuity, urban decay, invading aliens or site abandonment, all of which have been suggested in the past.

Nobody, therefore, should remain under the spell that Cemetery H Culture is alien and associable with so-called 'Invading Aryans'.

On the other hand, there is a positive case for demonstrating the continuity of population in the Harappan region. This truth is revealed through a close study of the human skeletal remains from a large number of protohistoric sites by Hemphill and his colleagues, who emphatically state: (1991: 137):

As for the question of biological continuity within the Indus Valley, two discontinuities appear to exist. The first occurs between 6,500 and 4,500 BC The second occurs at some point after 800 BC but before 200 BC.



So, even biologically, there is no case for an alien invasion or immigration, much less of the Aryans?

In the context of this 'Aryan Invasion' debate, it may also be well worthwhile to quote the views of some distinguished Western archaeologists. Thus, a renowned archaeologist from the country of Wheeler and Piggott themselves, Colin Renfrew, wrote (1988: 188 and 190):

When Wheeler speaks of 'the Aryan invasion of the Land of Seven Rivers, the Punjab', he has no warranty at all, so far as I can see. If one checks the dozen references in the Rig Veda to the seven rivers, there is nothing in any of them that to me implies an invasion. ... Despite Wheeler's comments, it is difficult to see what is particularly non-Aryan about the Indus valley.

From across the Atlantic comes another dissent. Two eminent archaeologists from USA, namely Jim G. Shaffer and Diane Lichtenstein (1999), totally disagree with the 'Invasion' theory:

A few scholars have proposed that there is nothing in the 'literature' firmly placing the Indo-Aryans outside of South Asia, and now archaeological record is confirming this. ... As data accumulate to support cultural continuity in South Asian prehistoric and historic periods, a considerable restructuring of existing interpretive paradigms must take place. We reject most strongly the simplistic historical interpretations, which date back to the eighteenth century, that continue to be imposed on south Asian cultural history. These still prevailing interpretations are significantly diminished by European ethnocentrism, colonialism, racism and antisemitism.

With the foregoing detailed analysis, should we not treat the 'Aryan Invasion' chapter as closed?





CHAPTER 3

The 'Aryan Immigration' Alternative Too Under Scanner

Even though vanquished, he would argue still.

— Oliver Goldsmith's *Village School Master*

Argue they must, because it is their sacred duty to fight for their committed 'cause', namely that the Aryans must have come from outside. Thus, failing to sustain the 'Aryan Invasion' theory, two eminent scholars from India go in for an alternative. They postulate an 'Aryan Immigration'. Thus, Professor Romila Thapar, a well-known historian, came out with the alternative theory by avowing (1989-91:259-60):

If invasion is discarded then the mechanism of migration and occasional contacts come into sharper focus. The migrations



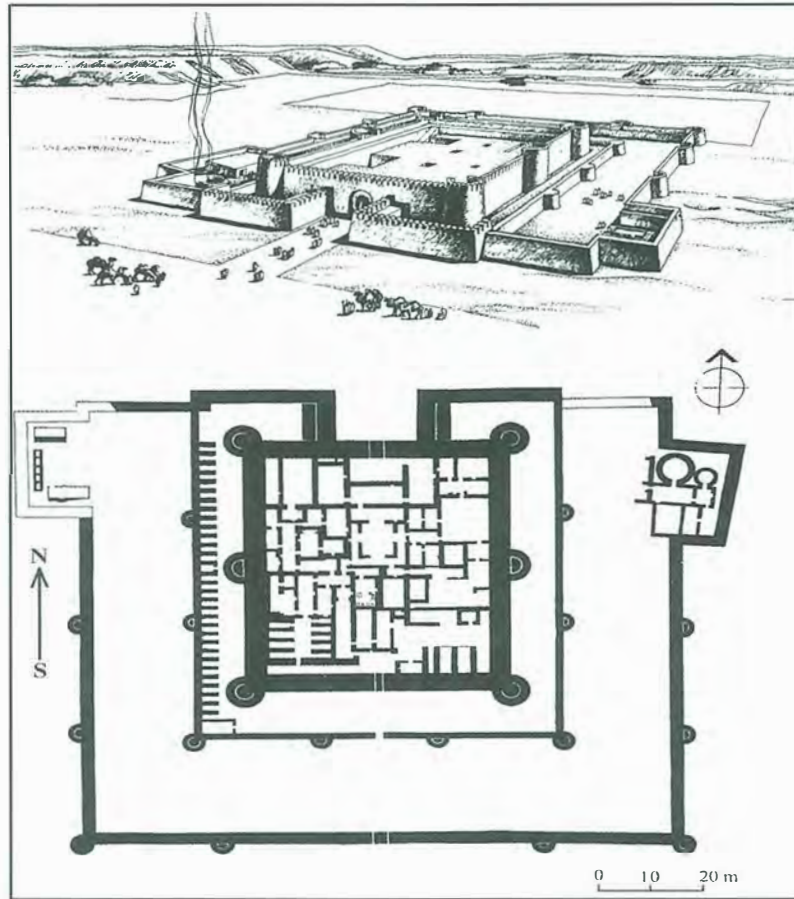


Fig. 3.1. Temple at Togolok-21, Margiana.

appear to have been of pastoral cattle breeders who are prominent in the *Āvestā* and the *Ṛigveda*.

Faithfully following her, in fact elaborating her new thesis, Professor R.S. Sharma, another noted historian, asserted (1999:77):

The pastoralists who moved to the Indian borderland came from the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex or BMAC which saw the genesis of the culture of the *Ṛigveda*.

Thus, the Thapar-Sharma theory envisages that: (i) the authors of the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex were 'pastoral cattle breeders'; (ii) they were Aryans; and (iii) they



entered the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent as immigrants. We shall now examine all the three assumptions, one by one.

A PROFILE OF THE BACTRIA-MARGIANA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMPLEX

To begin with, we shall give, though briefly, the various cultural constituents of the BMAC and then assess whether this complex can be regarded as that of 'pastoral cattle breeders', as held by the Thapar-Sharma duo. Many sites in Bactria in northern Afghanistan and in Margiana in Turkistan have been excavated by eminent archaeologists, including Victor I. Sarianidi. The excavations have brought to light many monumental buildings and a variety of rich artefacts, to some of which we shall refer below.

TOWN-PLANNING AND OTHER ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS

Though mostly made of mud bricks, the residential houses were often very large and elaborate, some of the rooms being marked out for specific purposes. But it is the monumental buildings which call for special attention. Here we shall refer to a temple-complex and a Citadel.

The temple-complex, at Togolok-21 in Margiana (Fig. 3.1), covers an area of about 1.5 hectares. The main structures in the central part are enclosed by three successive peripheral walls. Of these, the innermost one, enclosing an area 60 x 50 meters, is 5 meters in thickness and is provided with circular towers at each corner and semi-circular ones on the eastern and western sides. The two other peripheral walls, successively on the outer side, also have the same kind of features in so far as the towers are concerned.

Likewise, the Citadel at Gonur, also in Margiana, is a very elaborate affair. A look at Fig. 3.2 will convince one of the same. Roughly rectangular on plan, it stretches over an area measuring 120 x 115 meters. The fortification wall has rectangular towers, four on each side and one at each corner. There were about a dozen buildings inside, which included, besides the king's residence, administrative blocks, assembly halls, cult structures, etc. There was an area earmarked even for burial rites.



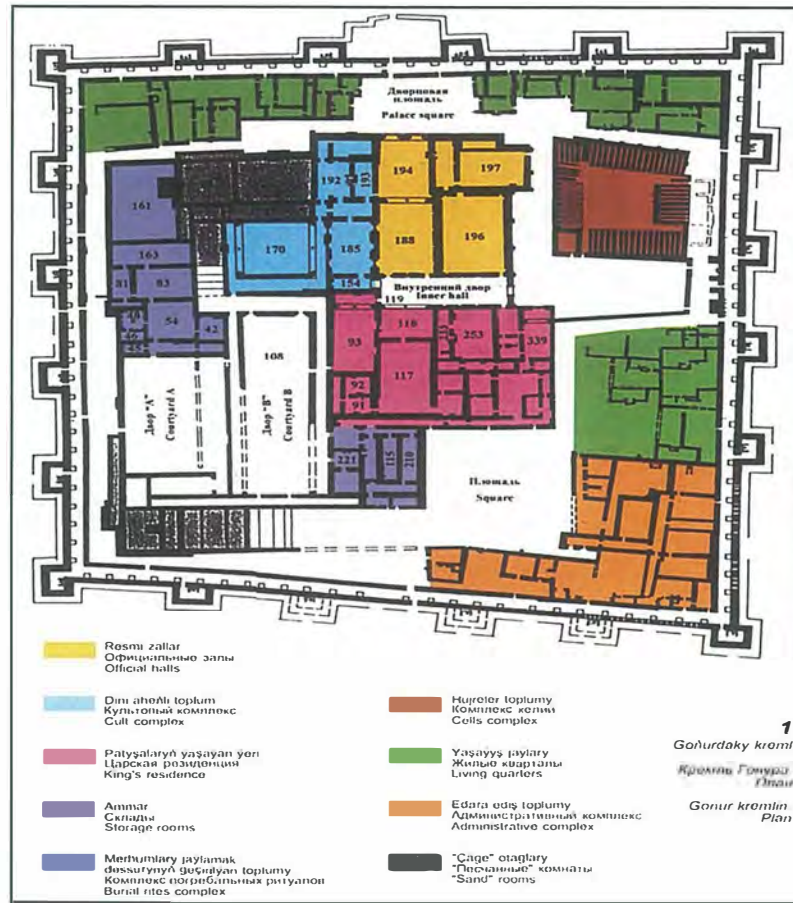


Fig. 3.2. Gonur, Margiana: Plan of the 'Citadel'.

SCULPTURAL ART

We present here two specimens of sculptural art: one each of a human and an animal figure. The former is that of a seated lady from Bactria (Fig. 3.3). In order to bring out the contrast in the portrayal, the sculptor has chosen a blackish stone for the dress with which a major part of the body is covered, but a pinkish white one for the head and hands. Also to be noted are not only the herring-bone weaves of the garment, but also the details in the depiction of hair-style.

It is not just the human beings that attracted the attention of the BMAC artists, but the animal world as well. There are many examples of excellently carved out animal figurines, as an example





Fig. 3.3. Bactria: Composite stone figure of a lady.

we present here that of a feline. Made of chlorite stone, the entire body is covered with gold leaf, which is further decorated with a variety of semi-precious stones. The facial expression of the animal is superb (Fig. 3.4). The specimen comes from Bactria.

METAL OBJECTS

The BMAC sites have yielded a rich harvest of metal objects, variously in copper, bronze, silver and gold. Here we would like to draw the reader's attention to a highly specialized axe,





Fig. 3.4. Bactria: Chlorite and gold-leaf representation of a feline, with semi-precious stone inlay.

made of silver and covered with gold lamina. However, it is not the metal content that is so important as the design and decoration (Fig. 3.5). The axe has a large socket at the butt-end, with heads of two eagles jutting out. On the socket there sits a winged feline, with the front legs outstretched and the mouth wide open. On the blade may also be seen some decorative motifs. Evidently, this particular axe was not meant for the ordinary purpose of cutting fire-wood. It definitely had some specialized use and the nearest that one can think of, in the rich and elaborate set-up of the BMAC, is that it may have been mounted on a (silver?) staff and used by the ruler (a king?) as a ceremonial axe.

With such elaborate monumental buildings, richly carved out human and animal sculptures and the 'ceremonial' silver axe, can the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex be regarded as the product of 'pastoral cattle breeders', as Thapar and Sharma would like us to believe? Perhaps no further comments are needed.



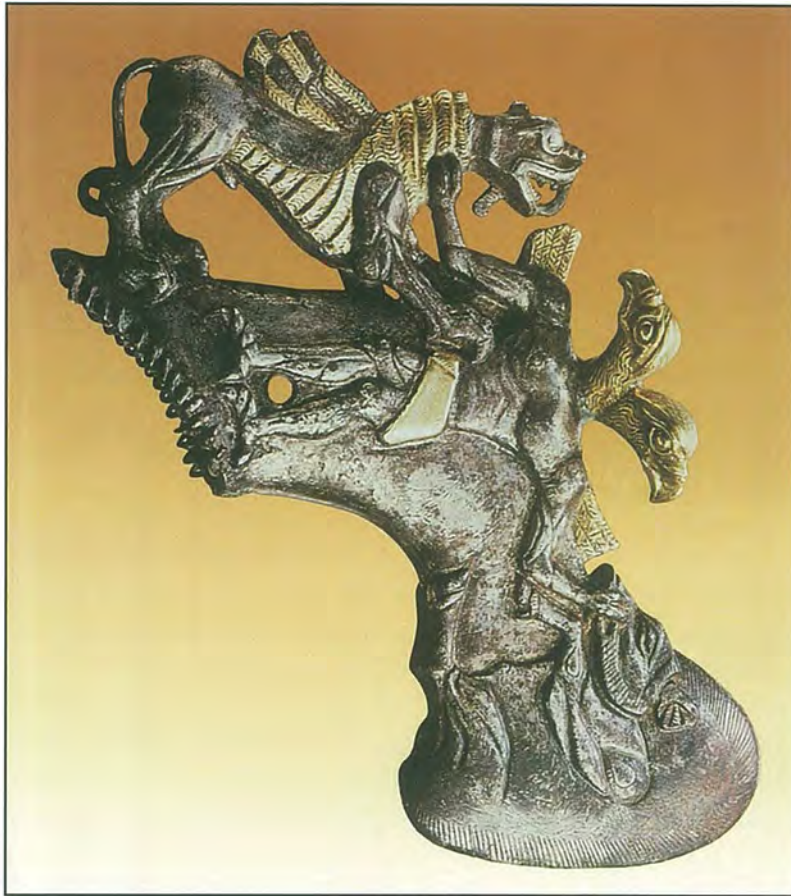


Fig. 3.5. Bactria: Silver ceremonial axe with parts covered with gold lamina.

THE BMAC VIS-À-VIS THE ARYANS

We now pass on to the second aspect of the problem, namely whether the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex can be regarded as being that of the Aryans. In this context, Sarianidi has advanced four types of supportive evidences. These are: (i) motifs on the seals; (ii) fire-worship; (iii) *soma*; and (iv) *aśvamedha* (horse-sacrifice).

(i) MOTIFS ON THE SEALS

The BMAC has yielded a large number of amulets and seals. While the former depict simple motifs like snakes, scorpions, eagles, two-humped Bactrian camels, etc., it is the seals that





Fig. 3.6. Impression of a cylinderseal from Gonur-1.

call for special attention, in particular the cylindrical ones. These carry some kind of a running story and we illustrate here two of these. The one illustrated as Fig. 3.6 shows a standing human figure having an avian head, with wings arising from each of the shoulders. He holds a mountain-goat-like animal in each of the hands. Eagles fly in the sky adjacent to the figure's head. The other seal (Fig. 3.7) has a different story to tell. On it there are two standing human figures each with an animal head. They hold a vertical pole on the pointed top of which rests the belly of another human figure with an animal head. This latter figure lies horizontally, as if the belly is going to be pierced by the pole. Behind the standing human figures are seated animal-headed humans, one of whom plays on a drum.

Professor Sarianidi banks heavily on the motifs on the BMAC seals as a proof the BMAC people having been the ancestors of the Indo-Aryans. Says he (1993b: 12-13):

In this connection worthy of utmost attention is the impression of a cylinder seal on one of the Margianian vessels, found... at Gonur. The central figure of a frequently repeated frieze composition is a standing nude anthropomorphic winged deity with an avian head holding two mountain goats by the legs...

Such anthropomorphic winged and avian-headed deities are represented fairly fully in the glyptics and on the seals of Bactria... These Bactrian images find the most impressive correspondence in Syro-Hittite glyptics.

If the fact that it is for the Mittani kingdom that the names of Aryan deities are evidenced is taken into account the importance of the Bactrian-Margianian images will become obvious in the





Fig. 3.7. Cylinder seal from Togolok-21 and its impression.

light of solving the Aryan problem on the basis of new archaeological data.

Since certain motifs on the BMAC seals compare well with those on the Syro-Hittite glyptics, it may be reasonable to say that there were some cultural contacts between the two areas. But on the basis of the simple fact that a Hittite-Mitanni treaty (the Bogazkoy one) refers to the Vedic gods like Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, etc., it is absolutely far-fetched to hold (as Sarianidi does) that the BMAC people were ancestral to the Vedic Aryans.

(II) FIRE WORSHIP

In one of his papers (1993a: 679), Sarianidi states:

A building unearthed at Gonur temenos and conveniently called a fort has a cross-shaped general plan with twelve corner towers. It most closely resembles the outer contours of the indisputable fire temple at Tepe Nush-i-Jan. A difference of minor importance only consists of the fact that while the towers are round at Gonur, they are square at Nush-i-Jan.

However, Sarianidi goes on to admit:

Unfortunately, the fort (at Gonur temenos) appears to be unfinished so we do not know its inner construction, but apparently it was a fire temple.

The reader should be able to see very clearly the innate weakness in Sarianidi's argument. When the Gonur temenos is



unfinished and nothing is known about its contents, how can it be taken to have been a 'fire temple.' Let not imagination have the upper hand!

(III) THE SOMA

The *soma* was a very favorite drink with the Vedic people. It was offered to the gods as well. In the *Avestā*, it is referred to as *haomā*, the Sanskrit sibilant 's' having changed into 'h'. Sarianidi states that this substance is the same as ephedra, though not many scholars agree with that equation. Anyway, he claims to have found this substance in the temple-complex at Togolok-21 (referred to earlier). However, Harri Nyberg, a well-known expert on the subject who examined the sample, does not agree that the given substance is really ephedra. This is what he has to say (1995: 400):

...remains of ephedras have also been reported from the temple-fortress complex of Togolok 21 in the Merv oasis (ancient Margiana – Parpola 1988; Meier-Melikyan 1990) along with the remains of poppies. ... In 1990 I received some samples from the site [forwarded by Dr. Fred Hiebert of Harvard University], which were subjected to pollen analysis at the Department of Botany, University of Helsinki.The largest amount of pollen was found in the bone tube (used for imbibing liquid?) from Gonur-1, but even in this sample, which had been preserved in a comparatively sheltered position when compared with the other investigated samples, only pollen of the family Caryophyllaceae was present. **No pollen from ephedras or poppies was found** and even the pollen left in the samples showed clear traces of deterioration (typical in ancient pollen having been preserved in a dry environment in contact with oxygen). Our pollen analysis was carefully checked for any methodological errors, but no inaccuracies were found.

It would thus be seen that even the identification of ephedra is doubtful. How can then we bank on the *Soma* theory?

(IV) THE AŚVAMEDHA (HORSE-SACRIFICE)

When one is keen to establish a theory, one draws upon any possible evidence that may come one's way. Thus, Sarianidi has pushed into the discussion the skeleton of a horse whose head





Fig. 3.8. Gonur, Margiana: Abandoned skeleton of a horse, mistaken by Sarianidi to represent the *aśvamedha* (horse-sacrifice).

is missing and calls it an example of the *aśvamedha* (Fig. 3.8). It would be seen from the photograph that the skeleton lies hardly a few centimeters below the ground level, which is observable on the top-left of the photograph. Also, there is no outline of a pit in which the horse may have been given a burial. There is no evidence of the animal having been deliberately beheaded and the absence of the head may be due to a variety of reasons, such as subsequent human interference or even an erosional process. The most important point is that the skeletal remains do not conform to what is laid down in the *Ṛigveda* itself in respect of a horse-sacrifice. For example, RV 1.162.18 runs as follows (Griffith's translation of the *Ṛigveda*, Vol. I, p. 216):

The four-and-thirty ribs of the swift Charger, kin to the Gods,
the slayer's hatchet pierces.

Cut ye with skill, so that the parts be flawless, and piece by
piece declaring them dissect them.

It would be observed that there is no evidence of 'the cutting of the skeleton piece by piece', as prescribed. Hence, it is clearly not an example of an *aśvamedha*.

By now the reader would have seen that all the four pillars, namely (i) the motifs on the sealings, (ii) fire-worship, (iii) *soma*,





Fig. 3.9. Distribution of the motif 'man-bird with hit-animals'.

and (iv) *aśvamedha*, on which the edifice of the association of the BMAC with the Vedic culture was sought to be erected, have collapsed, one by one.

And here is something no less important. Attention may be drawn to the two maps at Figs. 3.9 and 3.10, which were published by Sarianidi himself, as Figs. 2 and 5 along with his 1993b paper (only the brackets are added by me). Of these, Fig. 3.9 shows the distribution of the motif of 'man-bird with hit-animals'. It would be observed that this favorite BMAC motif occurs from the Bactria-Margiana region on the east to the Syro-Hittite region on the west but does not occur in the region south-east of the BMAC area. However, miniature bowls bearing on their rims the animal-and-snake motifs and miniature columns, again a characteristic of the BMAC, do travel westwards as well as southwards, but they do not cross the Indus on the east (Fig. 3.10). **The distribution maps thus clearly show that these characteristic BMAC elements did not at all enter the Vedic region, which was east of the Indus.**

At the same time, it would be unfair not to refer to a few items which occur east of the Indus and have their counterparts in Central Asia: for example, a double-spiral-headed copper pin from Chanhudaro, two-animal-headed copper pins from Harappa and some clay sealings from Gilund. But these stray items do not call for a 'migration' of the BMAC people into India. They could very well have been the result of trade-contacts, as





Fig. 3.10. Distribution of 'diminutive columns' and their probable prototypes in the Syrian-Hittite world.

have been visualized in the case of the occurrence of a variety of typical Harappan objects in Central and Western Asia.

PARPOLA'S SWORD

In a paper published in 1993, Asko Parpola, the learned scholar from Finland, states:

A newly found antennae-hilted sword from Bactria paralleling those from Fatehgarh suggests that this same wave of immigrants [from the BMAC] may also have introduced the Gangetic Copper Hoards into India.

While the similarity between the Bactrian and Fatehgarh swords is all right (Fig. 3.11), the theory, on that basis, of

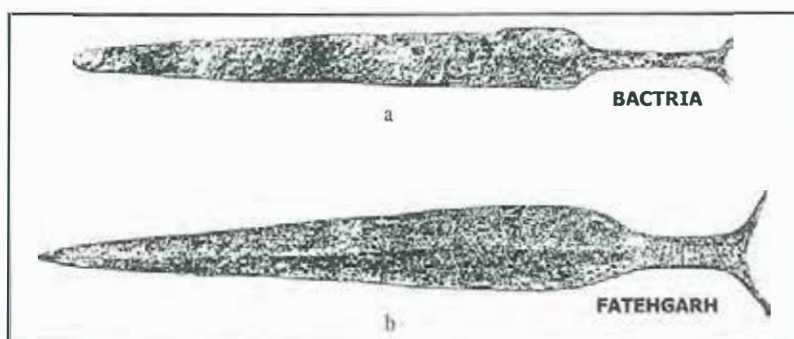


Fig. 3.11. Antennae-hilted swords of copper.



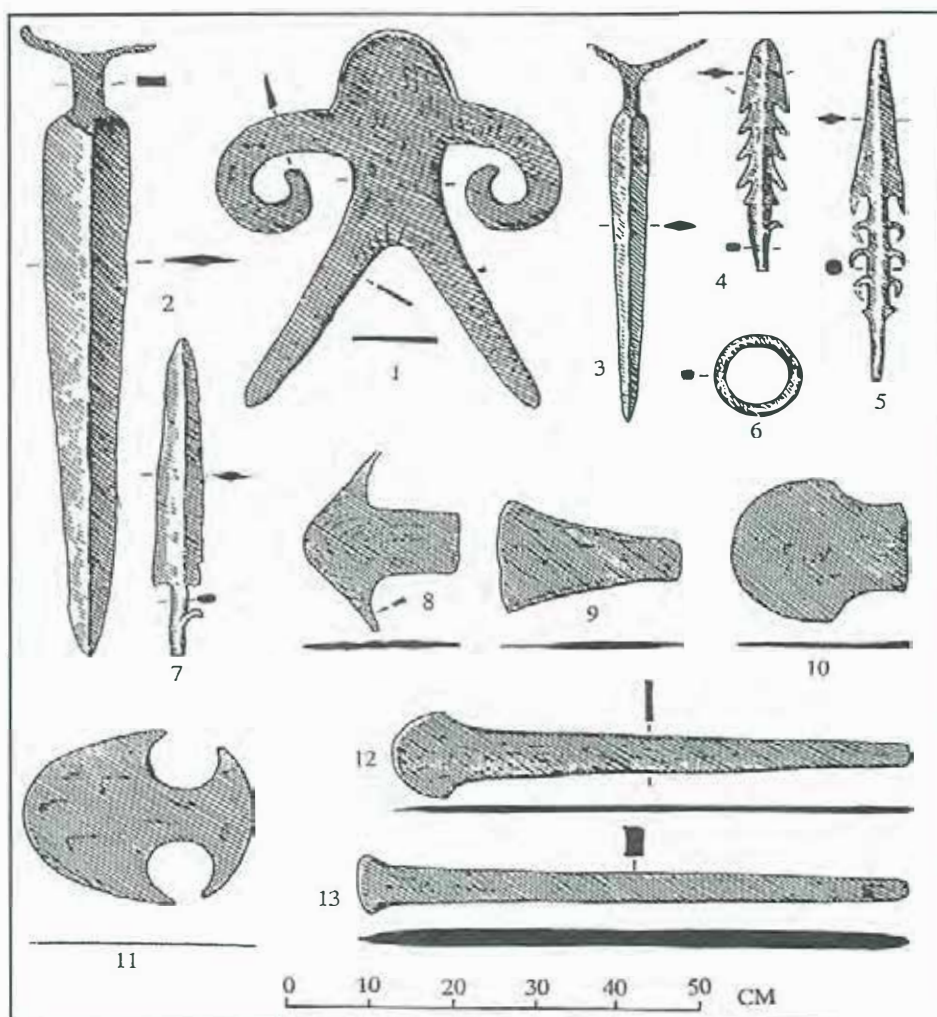


Fig. 3.12. Copper Hoards from the Gangetic valley, India.

immigration of the BMAC people into the Gangetic region, is indeed a far cry! This kind of sword is just a part of the Gangetic Copper Hoards, which include a number of other varieties, such as harpoons, anthropomorphic figures, shouldered axes, etc. (Fig. 3. 12), which have never been found in the BMAC context. And that is not the entire point. Whereas in the BMAC area we have found only a single specimen, in the Gangetic region there occur hundreds and hundreds of these Copper Hoard artifacts. Even a beginner in archaeology would straightaway say that



the single BMAC specimen cannot be the parent of the Gangetic Copper Hoard Culture. On the other hand, it is the BMAC specimen which must have been taken there from the Gangetic region. Enough of BMAC immigrants, please!





CHAPTER 7

The Civilization in the Sarasvatī Basin vis-à-vis the *Ṛigveda*

In the previous chapter we dealt with the evolution of the civilization in the Sarasvatī basin. We would now like to ascertain as to who exactly the people were who produced this remarkable civilization. As mentioned earlier (p. 41), the Sarasvatī was a much eulogized river during the Ṛigvedic times. It was regarded (RV 2.41.16) as *ambitame*, i.e. the best of mothers, *nadītame*, i.e. the best of rivers and *devitame*, i.e. the best of goddesses.

According to the *Ṛigveda*, there lived many 'peoples' in the Sarasvatī basin and many a king ruled there. For example, Verse RV 6.61.12 —

*Triṣadhasthā saptaadhātuh pañcha jātā vardhayantī /
vāje vāje havyā bhūt //* —



states that she (the Sarasvatī) was the 'promotor of five peoples'; but does not specify their names.

However, Verse RV 7.96.2 –

*Ubhe yatte mahinā śubhre andhasī adhikṣayanti Pūravah /
Sa no bodhyavitṛī marutsakhā choda rādho maghonām //* —

specifically does mention the **Pūrus**.

Even the rulers are sometimes mentioned by name. For example, RV 7.95.2 mentions the name of **Nahuṣa** —

*Ekāchetat Sarasvatī nadīnām śuchir yatī giribhya ā samudrāt/
Rāyaśchetanti bhuvanasya bhūrerghṛitam payo duduhe Nāhuṣāya //*

Or, RV 8.21.18 not only refers to a king named **Chitra** but mentions that there were other rulers as well, though of lesser importance.

*Chitra id rājā rājakā idanyake yake Sarasvatīmanu/
Parjanya iva tatanaddhi vṛiṣṭyā sahasramayutā dadat //*

There are many more examples of the kind. But even the few quoted above should suffice to convince the reader that according to the descriptions given in the *Rigveda*, the Sarasvatī basin was bustling with activities, with 'peoples' inhabiting it and kings ruling over them.

This picture would have straightaway established a correlation between the cultural remains unearthed in the Sarasvatī basin (referred to in the preceding chapter) and the textual descriptions in the *Rigveda*. Unfortunately, however, the date, viz. 1,200 BCE, assigned to the Vedas by Max Muller in the 19th century, has always been the greatest stumbling block. In spite of the fact that Max Muller himself retracted from it (see above, p. 11), a few scholars even today tenaciously cling to this date.

It is, therefore, imperative to re-examine the date of the *Rigveda*.

In determining the date of the *Rigveda*, the history of the river Sarasvatī plays a very important role. As already noted, the Sarasvatī was a mighty flowing river during the R̥gvedic times. However, the *Pañchvirīśa Brāhmaṇa* (XXV.10. 16) says: "At a distance of journey of forty days on horse-back from the spot where the Sarasvatī is lost (in the sands of the desert), (is





Fig. 7.1. Appearance of Bata-Markanda Divide, as a result of which the course of the Sarasvatī was diverted.

situated) Plakṣa Prasravaṇa". (Caland's translation, 1931, reprint 1982, p. 636.) While it may not be easy to identify correctly the location of Plakṣa Prasravaṇa, it is nevertheless clear that the Sarasvatī had dried up before the time of the *Pañchaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*.

However, this text does not tell us when exactly this drying up took place. We have, therefore, to look for evidence from other sources in this regard. And here geology, hydrology, archaeology and radiocarbon method of dating, all put together, come to our help.

In Chapter 5 we cited the field-work carried out by two eminent geologists, V.M.K. Puri and B.C. Verma (1998), which showed that the Sarasvatī originated from the Himalayan glaciers and moving south-westwards cut across the Siwaliks to descend on the plains. In the course of further field-work, these scholars have found out that because of tectonic movements there came up the Bata-Markanda Divide, which is nearly 30 meters in height (Fig. 7.1) It blocked the path of the



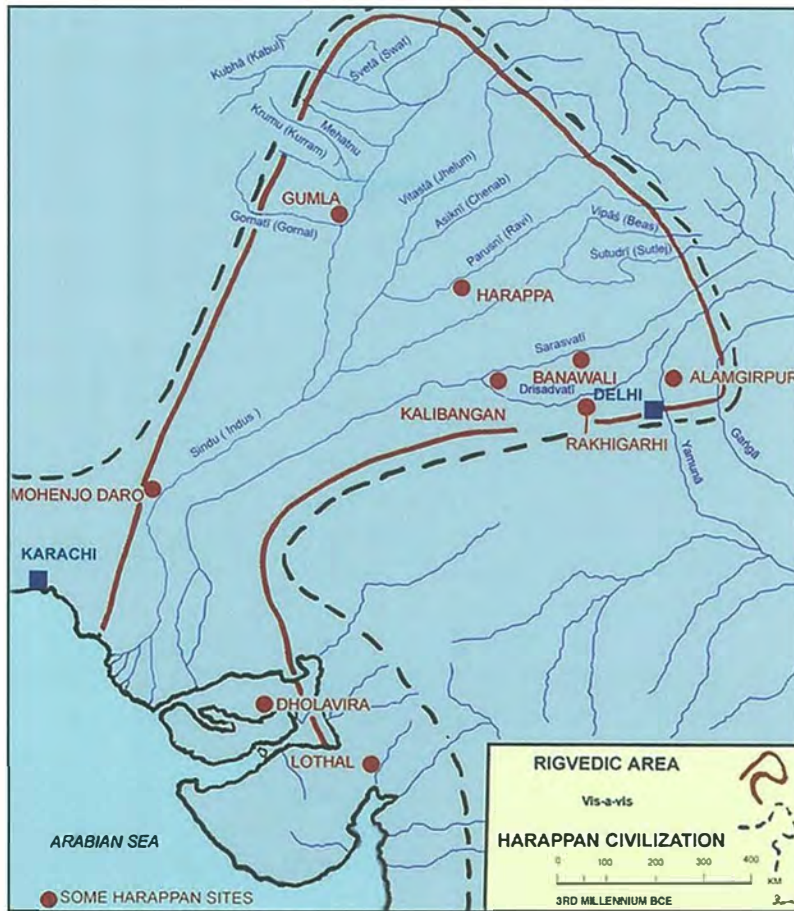


Fig. 7.2. Map showing a correlation between the Rigvedic area and the spread of the Harappan Civilization, in the 3rd millennium BCE.

Sarasvatī, which could no longer flow westwards. It had perforce to reverse its direction and, finding the Yamuna Tear opening on the south-east, took to a new course and joined the Yamunā. Thus ended the glorious story of the mighty Rigvedic Sarasvatī.

But when exactly did the Tectonic Demon stand in the way of the Sarasvatī following its old course and lose its identity? The geologists have not yet provided us a firm date. However, here the evidence of other sciences, namely hydrology, archaeology and C-14 method of dating the past is very significant.



In the 1960s, we were carrying out excavations at Kalibangan. An opportunity was taken to investigate the history of the now-dry Sarasvatī on whose bank the site is situated. A team of Indian and Italian hydrologists, under the leadership of Robert Raikes, bored several holes in the bed of the river. After a thorough analysis of the data, Raikes published a paper in *Antiquity* (1968), entitled, 'Kalibangan: Death from Natural Causes'. And the cause of the 'death' was the drying up of the river. According to radiocarbon dates (see above, p. 117), the settlement at Kalibangan had to be abandoned around 2,000-1900 BCE. In other words, the Sarasvatī dried up around 2,000 BCE.

Since during the days of the *Ṛigveda* the Sarasvatī was a mighty flowing river, it becomes self-evident that the *Ṛigveda* is anterior to 2,000 BCE. How much earlier is anybody's guess. At least a 3rd millennium BCE horizon is indicated. Further, the *Ṛigveda* consists of ten *Maṇḍalas* of which Nos. 6, 3 and 7 are acknowledged on all hands to be the earliest. It is thus not unlikely that the earliest *Maṇḍalas* may have been composed sometime in the 4th millennium BCE, if not somewhat earlier.*

Extending the canvas beyond the Sarasvatī basin, we find that the *Ṛigveda* gives a very good idea of the territory occupied by the Ṛigvedic people. Verses 5 and 6 of *Sūkta* 75 of *Maṇḍala* X refer to the entire area lying between the Gaṅgā-Yamunā on the east and the Indus and its western tributaries on the west, as follows:

*imam me Gaṅge Yamune Sarasvati Śutudri stomam sachatā
Paruṣṇyā /
Asiknyā Marudvṛidhe Vitastayā Ārjīkīye śṛiṇuhyā Suṣomayā // 5 //
Trīṣṭāmayā prathamam yātavi sajuh Susartvā Rasayā Śvetyā tyā /
Tvam Sindho Kubhayā Gomatīm Krumum Mehatnvā saratham
yābhiṛiyase // 6 //*

* In this context it may be mentioned that a reference to the shifting of the vernal equinox from Mṛigśiras to Rohiṇī in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* has led many astronomers to assign this text to ca. 3,500 BCE and thus the Vedas to the 4th millennium BCE or even earlier. Likewise, on the basis of the linguistic data, many other scholars (e.g., Kazanas 2009) place the *Ṛigveda* in the 4th millennium BCE.



O Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Śutudrī (Sutlej) and Paruṣṇī (Ravi), O Marudvṛidhā with Asiknī (Chenab), O Ārjikiyā with Vitastā (Jhelum) and Suṣomā (Sohan), please listen to and accept this hymn of mine. // 5 //

O Sindhu (Indus), flowing, you first meet the Trīṣṭāmā (and then) the Susartu, the Rasā and the Śvetā (Swat), and thereafter the Kubhā (Kabul), the Gomatī (Gomal), the Krumu (Kurram) with Mehatnu; and finally you move on in the same chariot with them (i.e. carry their waters with you).
// 6 //

Now, a forthright question may be asked: Archaeologically, which culture occupied this very area during the 3rd-4th millennia BCE, i.e. during the time of the *Rigveda*? The inescapable answer will have to be: the Harappan (also called the Indus/Indus-Sarasvatī) Civilization. In other words, the Vedas and the Harappan Civilization are but two faces of the same coin (see Fig. 7.2).^{**}

Further, in Chapter 6 we saw that the roots of this civilization go back to the 6th-5th millennia BCE. In other words, it was indigenous. Since, as we have just seen, this civilization and the Vedas are but two faces of the same coin, the Vedic people were indigenous. They were neither 'Invaders' nor 'Immigrants'.

How long shall we continue to blindfold ourselves?

^{**} Attention may be drawn to an interesting study by Bhagwan Singh (1995), wherein he compares various items of the Harappan Civilization with terms mentioned in the *Rigveda*.

